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APPLICATION FOR UNITED STATES PATENT

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PET TOY

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CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims priority benefit of co-pending provisional patent application No. 60/414,989, filed October 1, 2002, entitled STICK AND ROPE

20 PET TOY, the disclosure of which is incorporated by reference in its entirety herein.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to pet toys, more particularly to a pet toy incorporating a stick and a rope.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Pet toys are a growing area of product development as people spend increasing amounts of time, effort and money on their pets. Pet toys abound in the marketplace. One type of such toy is a string or rope which a pet, such as, but not 5 limited to a cat or dog, can chase. For the purposes of the present disclosure a cat will be used as a nonlimiting example of a pet which can use the toy of the present invention.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Generally described, the present invention provides in a first exemplary 10 embodiment a stick or elongated rod having at least one string or cord associated with one end thereof. The stick is preferably coated with or formulated to incorporate a material that glows in the dark. The string is attached by being glued or otherwise fastened (optionally removably) to the stick, such as by being glued to the inside end of the stick where the stick is hollow. The stick may also have an 15 end cap at each end to cover the stick. The string preferably has incorporated into it a glow in the dark material, either by being coated, braided with a glow in the dark strand or strands, or with the string material incorporating the glow in the dark material.

It is a feature of the present invention to provide a toy suitable for use with pets to 20 encourage play and exercise by providing an attractive object. It is another feature of the present invention to provide a toy that can be used in the dark for an

extended period of time. It is a further feature of the present invention to provide a toy with interchangeable objects at the end of the string for stimulating play.

Other features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent upon reading the following detailed description of embodiments of the invention, when 5 taken in conjunction with the appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The invention is illustrated in the drawings in which like reference characters designate the same or similar parts throughout the figures of which:

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of one exemplary embodiment of the present 10 invention.

Fig. 2 is a detail perspective view of an alternative exemplary embodiment of the present invention showing one end of the rod terminating in a loop to which the string can be secured.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

15 Fig. 1 shows one exemplary embodiment of a pet toy 10 of the present invention comprising an elongated rod 12 having a first end cap 14 and a second end cap 16. The rod can be made of any suitable material, such as, but not limited to, plastic, polymer, rubber, wood, metal, composite, mixtures of the foregoing, or the like. The rod 12 can be hollow, partially hollow (e.g., having a solid body and hollow 20 ends) or solid. The rod 12 is preferably hollow and made of plastic. The rod 12 material may incorporate (e.g., coated, impregnated, mixed therein, formed with

the polymer or plastic, laminated, or the like) a phosphorescent, fluorescent, luminescent, mixture thereof or other material (referred to hereinafter collectively as a “glow-in-the-dark” material) which enables the rod 12 to glow or give off light in the dark. The ends 18 and 20 of the rod 12, should the rod be hollow, can 5 be open or plugged with a material, such as glue, plastic, rubber, foam, mixtures thereof or the like to reduce the likelihood of moisture or other material entering the rod interior. The rod preferably, though not mandatorily, has the capability of glowing in the dark for up to 6 or more hours after being fully exposed to a light or other suitable energy source.

10 The end caps 14 and 16 are optional and, when used, may be made of a rigid or flexible material, such as, but not limited to, rubber, plastic, mixtures thereof or the like. As with the rod 12, the end caps 14 and/or 16 may have a “glow-in-the-dark” material incorporated therewith. The end caps 14 and 16 may removably slip over the ends 18, 20 and be maintained by a friction fit. Optionally, the end 15 caps can be glued, fused or otherwise adhered in place. The end cap 14 preferably has an aperture at the distal end 22.

A length of string 24 has a first end 26 and a second end 28. The string 24 can be mono- or multi-filament, braided, multi-strand, or the like and may be of any desired diameter, length and color or colors. The string 24 may be made of any 20 suitable material known to those skilled in the art, such as, but not limited to, nylon, cotton, polymer, mixtures and combinations thereof or the like. Preferably, the string 24 is nontoxic to pets, who may chew on it. Should the end become frayed, it may simply be cut off. The string 24 is preferably washable. It is also

possible to incorporate several separate strings 24, where each string is attached at one end to the rod 12, such as where two or more kittens are playing with the strings and each can grab for a different string 24.

The first end 26 of the string 24 is attached to the second end 18 of the rod 12, 5 such as, but not limited to, by inserting the first end 26 into the end opening of the rod 12 where the rod 12 is hollow. The first end 26 may be glued in place in the second end 19 opening. Alternatively, the first end 26 can be tied to the rod 12 by a knot. Alternatively, the rod 12 can have a loop or hook (as shown in Fig. 2) at the end to which the string 24 can be tied. Preferably, the end cap 14 is slid over 10 the string 24 before adhering in place. Alternatively, the string 24 can be held in place by being of sufficient thickness to be force-fitted in the second end 18. Optionally, in order to prevent fraying, the second end 28 of the string 24 can be coated, glued with a material (e.g., a sealant), fused or the like.

Optionally, the string 24 can have at least a portion of the string (or the entire 15 string), e.g., at least one segment, or at least one filament or thread incorporating a glow-in-the-dark material, as described hereinabove. The filament or thread can incorporate the material, or the string can be coated or impregnated with the material.

Optionally, at least a portion of the string 24 and/or the rod 12 can incorporate a 20 microbiocidal or antimicrobial material. One example of a microbiocidal material is Microban® from Ricura (Huntersville, North Carolina). This may be

advantageous to reduce the possibility of bacteria building up in the string or the rod from being chewed on or in contact with the pet's saliva or other bodily fluids.

Optionally, at least a portion of the string 24 can have incorporated therein a scent or flavor, such as, but not limited to, catnip or the like to increase the 5 attractiveness of the string 24 to pets, particularly cats. The scent or flavor may be impregnated in or coated on the string 24 or provided in a bottle which used to spray or otherwise apply the scent or flavor.

Optionally, the end 28 of the string 24 can have attached or associated with it one or more conventional play toys (not shown), such as, but not limited to, a ball, 10 light, bell, mouse shaped material, dog bone or biscuit shaped material, plush animal, ball of threads, combinations thereof, or the like. Optionally, the second end 28 of the string 24 can have a loop to which can be attached the play toy.

Alternatively, the play toy can have a loop or fastening mechanism (e.g., a clip, clamp, snap, hook, hook-and-loop (e.g., VELCRO®) system, or the like) 15 incorporated therein to which the string can be tied, secured or fastened.

Alternatively, the string 24 can be attached to the play toy, such as, but not limited to, by gluing. The play toy can be incorporated by having a plurality of strings 24, each attached at one end to the rod and at the other end each attached to a play toy (the same or different). This may facilitate and enhance play with two or more 20 pets, such as kittens, who would likely prefer their own toy to chase.

The present invention further provides a kit comprising a rod 12 with end caps 14, 16, a string 24 associated therewith, at least one of the following: a bottle of a scent or flavor, as described hereinabove and a play toy, as described hereinabove,

An advantage of the present invention is that it can be used in the dark when 5 incorporating a glow-in-the-dark material. An advantage of the kit of the present invention is that various play toys can be used for different situations, e.g., a kitten may like a ball of string, whereas an older cat may enjoy a string or ball with a catnip scent.

Although only a few exemplary embodiments of this invention have been 10 described in detail above, those skilled in the art will readily appreciate that many modifications are possible in the exemplary embodiments without materially departing from the novel teachings and advantages of this invention. Accordingly, all such modifications are intended to be included within the scope of this invention as defined in the following claims.

15 It should further be noted that any patents, applications and publications referred to herein are incorporated by reference in their entirety.